

## SSUDAC Meeting Summary March 21, 2013

**Members Present:** Ernest Bland, Dan Figueroa, Don Hague, Thomas Kaufman, Ed Levy, Jon Lourie, Melvin Tull

**Members Absent:** Carmen Camacho, Jessica Evans

### **Call to Order and Introductions:**

- Mr. Ernest Bland, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:36 p.m. He introduced Dan Figueroa, the new advisory committee member representing Peterson Management.
- Mr. Bland shared that he had a meeting with Radio One & TV One founder Cathy Hughes to discuss a mutually beneficial partnership of promoting Radio One as well as utilizing it as a resource for the marketing of downtown Silver Spring. Reemberto Rodriguez and Yvette Freeman joined Mr. Bland for this meeting, held at the Radio One offices located in downtown Silver Spring.
- Mr. Bland mentioned that he has been unable to meet regularly with the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce in recent months and that the Silver Spring Transit Center is faced with an increasing number of setbacks.

### **Reports:**

#### **Police Briefing & Crime Report**

Lt. Elizabeth Hattenburg, 3<sup>rd</sup> Police Precinct

- Lt. Hattenburg reported that both assaults and robberies in the Silver Spring area were down, but that vehicular pedestrian accidents were up County-wide.
- Lt. Hattenburg mentioned two recent accidents, one just north of Colesville Rd. and Spring St. involving a pedestrian struck by a vehicle, and the other a bicycle fatality that occurred at Silver Spring Ave. and Fenton Ave.
- Lt. Hattenburg noted that due to the dramatic increase in pedestrian fatalities, County police will be having a Pedestrian Safety Awareness event, beginning April 14<sup>th</sup> and lasting approximately 10-14 days. Police officers will be monitoring various streets within the Silver Spring area, ticketing both vehicles and pedestrians that fail to obey traffic laws.
- Lt. Hattenburg updated the committee on a series of 3 arrests in a local burglary case, as well as arrests made in an assault incident at the Everest Cosmetology Institute, located at 8757 Georgia Ave.

- Committee Chair Ernest Bland inquired about the status of the 7-11 convenience store robbery suspects mentioned at last month's committee meeting. Lt. Hattenburg stated that they had not made any arrests in the case and that the suspects remained at large.
- Committee member Mel Tull asked Lt. Hattenburg if there were any items in the County Executive's FY14 operating budget that the police needed the advisory committee to support. Lt. Hattenburg stated that their most pertinent budget items were the addition of 120 new officers over the next 3 years, as well as the new police station expected to open in December.
- Lt. Hattenburg also updated the committee on the status of the police bike unit, and noted that there would be a full contingent of officers in the downtown area for MCPS students' upcoming spring break.

#### Urban District Report

Ms. Yvette Freeman, Silver Spring Urban District

Ms. Freeman presented the Silver Spring Urban District report, discussing numerous issues, including:

- Serious concerns regarding necessary street and sidewalk repairs in the I.O.S. (Interim Operations Site) service area now need to be addressed due to the continued delay in the opening of the Silver Spring Transit Center. Committee member Mel Tull noted that there was no mention of funds for these repairs or for extending the operation of the I.O.S. in the recent FY14 operating budget.
- Ms. Freeman noted that the State Highway Administration would be in the downtown area to observe pedestrian traffic patterns along Colesville Rd. up Georgia Ave. to Thayer Ave. on March 28<sup>th</sup>, from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. She encouraged committee members encountering SHA staff on the street to approach and share their concerns and comments.
- During a recent US 29 and Silver Spring Pedestrian Safety Roadway Safety Audit Stakeholders meeting with SHA, Ms. Freeman communicated concerns about the intersections of Georgia Ave. & Colesville Rd., Colesville Rd. & Fenton Ave., and the increased of accidents occurring at these intersections. She also gave feedback regarding pedestrian and light signaling, with special mention made about providing adequate time for elderly/disabled residents to cross. The reversible lane signalization along Colesville Rd. will soon be upgraded but in order to slow traffic down for pedestrians the introduction of medians along Colesville Rd was also discussed during this meeting. Ms. Freeman felt that her feedback was heard by SHA.

- Committee member Mel Tull asked if SHA was aware of the BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) study. Ms. Freeman indicated that they were and had been specifically advised to consider the Purple Line, the BRT study and nearby residences when evaluating traffic and pedestrian safety in the Silver Spring area.

#### Silver Spring Regional Area Director's Report

Mr. Reemberto Rodriguez, Silver Spring Regional Center

- Mr. Rodriguez presented his report, noting that the County Executive is scheduled to meet with the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board, the Transportation Management District and members of the Silver Spring Urban District in April. Committee member Jon Lourie noted that this meeting would be a good opportunity to mention the recent issues concerning the Silver Spring Transit Center and I.O.S. functionality.
- The Silver Spring Urban District's Weekenders program has proven so successful that the White Flint and Bethesda areas are emulating the program.
- Mr. Rodriguez mentioned the recent Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce "SchmoozaPalooza" event at the Fillmore on March 20<sup>th</sup>, noting that it had been an excellent opportunity for networking between large and small businesses.
- The Conference Investments Bureau has put together a video about Montgomery County that will be shown on select airline flights and will feature footage of downtown Silver Spring. The Arts & Entertainment Advisory Committee is also working on a video showcasing Silver Spring's nightlife.
- Mr. Rodriguez mentioned the County's initiative to push Silver Spring's nighttime economy, referring back to Lt. Hattenburg and Ms. Freeman's earlier points relating to pedestrian safety in the evening hours and the need to balance the area's burgeoning nightlife with safety for all residents.
- Mr. Rodriguez noted general concerns about the large amount of simultaneous development projects in the downtown area, specifically the general appearance of the area, pedestrian safety, overall traffic flow and parking. Committee member Ed Levy inquired as to whether construction workers were taking up a large number of public parking areas. Mr. Rodriguez replied that most developers were arranging for alternate parking locations for their workers, but that with so many developers in one area it is challenging to arrange other parking areas for all of them.
- Committee member Mel Tull emphasized the need for a task force to address nightlife in downtown Silver Spring. Mr. Rodriguez reported that names had been put forth for such a task force.

- Concerns were stressed regarding the Silver Spring Transit Center, the I.O.S. and adjacent roadway conditions. Yvette Freeman mentioned that a monthly I.O.S. meeting occurs at the Silver Spring Urban District. The committee concluded that requesting a presentation from I.O.S. staff members would be helpful at the next advisory committee meeting.

#### New Business

Committee member Ed Levy proposed a motion to accept the February 21st meeting summary (for the record). Mel Tull seconded, barring one minor edit to correct the name of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Committee to Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board. The motion was carried unanimously.

#### The “Nuts & Bolts” of Planning & Zoning for Downtown

Mr. Elza Hisel-McCoy, Montgomery County Planning Board

Mr. Hisel-McCoy spoke at the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee meeting to inform committee members about Silver Spring’s current zoning standards and challenges in the downtown area.

Key points made included:

- The downtown Silver Spring area’s master zoning plan has not been updated since 2000. Three minor/master plan amendments were approved by the Council.
- Committee members requested clarification on differences between master and sector plans. The master plan is a broad overview of an area, while a sector plan has a much tighter, focused feel. Downtown Silver Spring’s Central Business District is governed under a zoning sector plan.
- In the Silver Spring CBD there are no zoning requirements but general design guidelines, which have no specifications and only offer vague examples. In terms of rezoning an area, only certain locations may be rezoned. A zoning text amendment represents a minor change to the wording of a zone’s requirements, which anyone may file.
- Committee Chair Ernest Bland inquired as to which plan would address the height/proportion issues that the Fenton Village development is currently facing. Mr. Hisel-McCoy indicated that amending the overlay zone would be the best approach.
- A long standing downtown Silver Spring issue has been the zoning requirement for developers to devote 20% of their property to public use space, or donate to an established amenity fund. This requirement has led to the rise of “pocket parks,” small unused mini-parks that are not serving any public purpose. The Planning Board currently provides no guidelines relating to the amenity fund. A proposed solution is to either reduce the public use space requirement to 10% or waive the

requirement altogether in favor of incentivizing contributions to the amenity fund.

- Contributions to the amenity fund “have their own set of problems,” because finding space to develop properly sized parks with the amenity fund is difficult within Silver Spring’s CBD. High development costs as well as the amenity fund itself discourage developers from moving forward on projects.
- Committee member Mel Tull inquired as to whether or not urban density cleared for parks could be rezoned and moved to other areas to preserve Silver Spring’s budding nightlife. Mr. Hisel-McCoy indicated that this could be achieved by developers joining together to redevelop spaces in adjacent areas.
- Committee member Jon Lourie mentioned that it would be productive for him and Chair Ernest Bland to meet separately with Mr. Hisel-McCoy to further discuss these zoning and procedural issues, and simultaneously requested that Mr. Hisel-McCoy prepare a list of underdeveloped properties that could benefit from the amenity fund to be presented at the next Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee meeting.
- Committee member Mel Tull proposed a motion to write a letter to the County Council to support the Silver Spring Urban District budget specifically to address these planning and zoning issues. Don Hague seconded and the motion was carried unanimously.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.